

RRMRC Volunteers Assist with Hurricane Katrina

When the alert regarding Hurricane Katrina came from the National Medical Reserve Headquarters, all 226 trained Rappahannock-Rapidan Medical Reserve Corps Volunteers were notified.

Thank you to the 28 RRMRC volunteers who were able to offer their assistance to work with the American Red Cross, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the state of Virginia. 6 of these volunteers were called upon to participate. The following two articles give a glimpse of what life was like in the Gulf Coast area.

Mississippi

by William Laffond, MD

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 28, 2005, east of New Orleans, LA, and wrought devastation and death on coastal Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The city of New Orleans then took a second blow, as the levees holding water back from massive Lake Pontchartrain failed, engulfing much of the city in flood water. Millions of Americans watched in horror as hundreds of thousands of survivors were trapped in various locations in the city. Meanwhile, entire coastal towns in Mississippi and Alabama were wiped out. Like many across America and from around the world, I was compelled to help in some way.

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Texas

by Wanda Beavers, LPN

Many lives were touched by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita...not only the victims and evacuees, but also the lives of thousands of volunteers who were deployed by ARC/MRC to assist in the disaster relief operations.

During my two week deployment, I was sent to Baton Rouge, Louisiana and then to the Houston/Huntsville Texas area. Our medical team was able to work with evacuees from New Orleans at the Reliant Center. The stories we heard from these people regarding their experiences in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were heart wrenching. In some people, the despair was palpable and yet in others, hope remained. Surprisingly, the elderly seemed to remain the most resilient. For many, faith was the key factor. We performed basic assessments and first aid care (as per ARC protocol), and assisted mainly with further evacuations to Arkansas due to the approach of Hurricane Rita.

Our medical team was then sent to Huntsville to help open a shelter at the local high school. While working with an incredible group of volunteers from the community, we experienced all that is good about America.

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Photo courtesy of William Laffond

Orientation, Trainings, and Drills

Training

Orientation and Training sessions are held monthly except for July and December. Orientations will be held weekday evenings from 6-7 pm/or Saturday mornings from 9-10 am. A training topic will follow each orientation.

Tentative training topics planned for 2006 include:

- January 17-Nuclear/Radiation
- February-Explosives /Bombs
- March 30-Epidemiology for the non-Epidemiologists
- April-National Incident Management System
- May-Category A Bioterrorism Agents
- June-Chemical Agents
- August-Family and Personal Preparedness
- September-Pandemic Flu

Remember all volunteers are required to attend at least one training session per calendar year.

Learn More, Update Your Skills

To participate in one of the following classes you must be a trained RRMRC volunteer. Advance registration is required due to limited class size. If you are interested in attending any of the classes listed below, please let the office know. Enroll for the classes through the website, phone or email.

Sheltering

The RRMRC and The Rappahannock Chapter of the American Red Cross will hold a class in Disaster Sheltering at the Orange Rescue Squad on Wednesday, January 25 from 6-9:30 PM. Class size minimum of 6-maximum of 20.

CPR

CPR classes will be held at various times throughout the year.

How to Interpret Correctly

Do you have the ability to converse in another language? Would you be willing to interpret at a dispensing site? Do you know there is a correct way to interpret? Join with other RRMRC volunteers to learn the correct way to interpret.

Disaster Mental Health Class

A class is being planned for spring.

Are you Interested in becoming a Ham Radio Operator?

A special orientation and class will be held for current Ham Radio Operators. If there is enough interest, a class will be held to train volunteers to become Ham Radio Operators.

Smallpox Vaccination Training Class

If you were not able to attend the last Smallpox Vaccination Training Class, another one will be offered in March.

“OctoberTEST”

by Kathy Hatter, Emergency Planner

October was a time for emergency preparedness drills around the state. Five RRMRC volunteers participated in an Anthrax drill in Loudoun County on October 22nd. Participants included Brenda and Robert Leahmann, and Gary, Karla and Sarah Chiles.

From October 24th through 28th, Health Departments and Emergency Preparedness workers were busy with “OctoberTEST”, a multi-state drill involving responders from Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The drill was designed to test localities, agencies and hospitals on how well they work together to respond to a series of fictional emergency public health events, as well as the ability to work across state lines.

Several RRMRC volunteers participated in “OctoberTEST”. Russell and Nita Brindley presented to Fauquier Hospital Emergency Room as “patients” with symptoms of botulism. Thomas Holbach, Cindy Ellis, Betty Thomas, Steven Yoder, and Demaris Miller all attended the dispensing site in Charlottesville. There they worked as staff, and were “patients” who had been exposed to Monkeypox.

Our goal during these exercises is to treat this as an actual event where people are getting ill and dying,” said Lisa G. Kaplowitz, MD, MSHA, VDH’s Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Preparedness and Response. “We’re not just playing a game during this week, we’re acting out life and death situations so that our emergency response community will be prepared if we ever have to face a bioterrorism or disease outbreak event in the Commonwealth.”

Keep Us Informed!

Have you moved, changed your email address or phone numbers, updated your professional or drivers’ licenses, CPR, or first aid cards? Please make sure we have the correct information on file

QUARTERLY QUIZ

1. What should volunteers have on at every training?
2. What does Isolation mean?
3. What does Quarantine mean?
4. How long should you wash your hands?
5. Should you go to work or a public place if you have the flu?

Want to Join or Learn More?

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RRMRC Volunteers Assist with Hurricane Katrina (cont.)



Sleeping Quarters and Sick Bay, West Point, MS
Photo courtesy of William Laffond

MISSISSIPPI cont.

My deployment orders came quickly after credentialing was completed. As a second deadly storm, Rita, again threatened the coast, my original assignment of Baton Rouge, LA, was converted to Montgomery, AL. There were many people who had lost loved ones, all their belongings, and everything they used to call "home." Stories of tragedy, sorrow, bravery, compassion and human dignity were too numerous to count. A day trip to New Orleans to assist in the barely-reopened city, stamped the immensity of the tragedy even more indelibly on me. The destruction, the debris, the flood water lines, the quiet, were eerie and surreal.

The mission DR 871, Katrina relief in Columbus Mississippi, has changed me forever. It was an honor to join so many other caring people from all parts of this country and Canada, in helping even this small number of victims of Hurricane Katrina. I would do it again without hesitation, and I recommend the experience to anyone who has the time and ability.

TEXAS cont.

The shelter capacity was 300 people. By the time Hurricane Rita hit, we had a total of 1280. Many people had been stranded on the roads, caught in the mass exodus from the Houston area. The local volunteers would return to their own homes and neighborhoods frequently to gather up more food and bedding, as well as anything else that could be used to meet the needs of the evacuees. Many took evacuees into their own homes. We had never witnessed such an outpouring of love, compassion and "random acts of kindness". We were so blessed by these people, as well as the special needs clients that we took care of during this stressful time. Time and again we would come to see similar situations at shelters that were being run by local churches. We saw many local volunteers work all night at the shelters and then go to their "real jobs" in the morning.

Some of our team has stayed in touch with those we met in the communities, as well as with some of the evacuees. We have also stayed in touch with each other. Our medical team was an incredible blend of people... including an 18 year old EMT, a PA, and 5 nurses. All of us had varying specialties, experiences and strengths. An unbelievable bond developed between us during the two weeks we were together.

We were enormously frustrated with the "bureaucracy" and all the red tape that so paralyzes, and therefore limits, our contributions to the disaster relief efforts. But, our lives and hearts were touched... by not only the other volunteers we worked with... but by the multitudes of people that we were sent to help. It was an experience we will never forget.



Photo courtesy of William Laffond

Wow! August 1— November 1 Wow!

- **25** volunteers joined the RRMRC bringing the total to **291**
- **28** volunteers received orientation for a total of **226**
- **79** volunteers received training
- Susan Frech, Kimberly Johnson-Smith, Carole Roddy, and Bud Worman volunteered a total of **24** hours in the Office.
- Richard Vento, Carole Roddy, Susan Frech, and Barbara Klagges volunteered **35** hours as training assistants

Answers to Quiz on Page 2

- Question 1 Their RRMRC ID Badge
- Question 2 Isolation is when an ill person is placed in an area by herself
- Question 3 Quarantine is when people who have been exposed to a person who is ill are kept away from everyone else.
- Question 4 For 20 seconds or sing Happy Birthday twice.
- Question 5 No



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DATES TO REMEMBER

January 17, 2006	
Orientation	6-7 pm
Training Topic:	7-9 pm
Nuclear Radiation	
Place: Culpeper Rescue Squad	
January 25, 2006	
Optional Training	6-9:30 pm
Red Cross Disaster Sheltering	
Place: Orange Rescue Squad	
February 2006	
Orientation	6-7 pm
Training Topic:	7-9 pm
Explosives/Bombs	
Place: To Be determined	
March 30, 2006	
Orientation	6-7 pm
Training Topic:	7-9 pm
Epidemiology for the Non-Epidemiologist	
Place: Fauquier Hospital	

Vision

Volunteers
Protecting Virginia's
Public Health

Mission

To serve the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock by establishing local teams of public health volunteers to strengthen the public health infrastructure and improve Emergency Preparedness and Response.